

the shadow bind

BY ELENA VANCE

The Shadow Bind
Echoes of the Hollow

THE SHADOW BIND

A Novel

ELENA VANCE

ONE WORLD / NEW YORK

ONE WORLD

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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For all who search in the dark

today

THE FRIGID AIR burned Faruq's nose; when he blew it later, he would find that the city's dirt had made its way inside him with the cold. Cars passed him sleepily, their headlights murky streaks in the early morning gloom. He wore only a thermal shirt, gloves, and running tights. His muscles were warm, though. His body moved exactly as it needed to. Beneath him, the East River, still semi-frozen, chugged icily. Gray slush slapped up from the bridge onto his ankles, some of it hooking into the thin strip of bare flesh between his running tights and his socks, one of which had slipped down a little. He was still on an incline and the deeper his breath, the lighter he felt—less weight to carry uphill before the glorious downward slope off the bridge, where he'd fly with no effort, letting gravity carry him down onto Centre Street, through the crowded heel of Manhattan. He took another deep breath. *Don't you stop*, he told himself. *Just keep going.*

When his father was still here, the morning ritual was different, less quiet. His father would expect Faruq to do morning prayers with him, and then he'd sit at the table with his newspaper, commenting disapprovingly on what he read there. Now, Faruq had a quick, post-run granola bar at the kitchen counter, the news blaring distantly from the television in the living room. Muezza yawned as Faruq scratched behind his ears. The cat liked to act like he was unaffected by Faruq's comings and goings, but whenever Faruq returned home

after being gone long, Muezza followed him from room to room, a low, persistent hum vibrating in his chest.

before: 1969

THE VOICES ARRIVED in fragments through the wiretap receiver, muffled by the hiss of magnetic tape and the rumble of late-night subway trains beneath the pavement.

OPERATOR: Line is live. Target entered the room at 23:14. RECORDING [TAPE 4B]: ... had come and now. ... talking about the incident, sure. We were sent to observe, not to intervene. ... the people in the redwoods belong to a different charter. BLACK: Did they sign the covenant? RECORDING: It wasn't signed in ink. It was sworn in blood.

Faruq adjusted the earphones. The room smelled of damp plaster and old coffee. He had spent three weeks cataloging these recordings, searching for the single phrase that would prove his brother hadn't disappeared by choice.



[Author Photo]

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